

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, EG, LY

SUBJECT: IN RESPONSE TO FAHMY

REF: (A) CAIRO 17746, (B) TRIPOLI 1620

1. AMBASSADOR EILTS WAS INSTRUCTED TO RESPOND TO FAHMY'S
QUERY CONCERNING LIBYA AND U.S. POLICY (REF A) ALONG
FOLLOWING LINES:

2. AS EILTS POINTED OUT TO FAHMY, U.S. POLICY TOWARD LIBYA
HAS NOT CHANGED. OUR RELATIONS CONTINUE TO BE STRAINED.
WE CONTINUE TO REFUSE EXPORT LICENSES FOR SIGNIFICANT MILI-
TARY ITEMS SUCH AS THE EIGHT C-130'S BOUGHT AND PAID FOR BY
LIBYA AND A REQUEST FOR AN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM EVEN THOUGH
LIBYA CONTINUES TO EXPRESS INTEREST IN THESE ITEMS. WE
DID NOT AGREE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF A LIBYAN AMBASSADOR IN
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DEFERENCE TO SADAT'S CONCERN AND THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE
IN THIS POSITION. DESPITE REPEATED ATTEMPTS BY THE LIBYAN
GOVERNMENT TO ENGAGE US IN HIGH-LEVEL TALKS IN WASHINGTON
AIMED AT AN IMPROVEMENT IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, WE HAVE
DECLINED TO DO SO. IN ANY EVENT, WE WOULD NOT TAKE ANY
STEPS WITHOUT FIRST CHECKING WITH EGYPT. WHILE WE ARE

GLAD TO GIVE FAHMY OUR ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL SITUATION IN LIBYA, WE BELIEVE THAT EGYPT IS IN A MUCH BETTER POSITION TO MONITOR CURRENT EVENTS IN LIBYA AND TO INTERPRET THEM. WE INVITED EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON THE STRENGTH OF THE CURRENT LIBYAN REGIME AND THE MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF OPPOSITION TO QADHAFI AS WELL AS FAHMY'S COMMENTS SPECIFICALLY ON THE FOLLOWING:

--POLITICALLY, EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF HAVE MADE VISIBLE THE HOLLOWNESS OF REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL (RCC) AS AN EXECUTIVE BODY. SINCE AUGUST 1975, MOST RCC MEMBERS HAVE EITHER FLED THE COUNTRY OR ARE UNDER HOUSE ARREST, LEAVING ONLY FIVE--INCLUDING QADHAFI HIMSELF--STILL ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE GOVERNMENT. IT APPEARS THAT QADHAFI CAN COUNT ON UNQUESTIONING LOYALTY FROM ONLY TWO OF THESE, PRIME MINISTER JALLUD AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF YUNIS. THE OTHER TWO, CHIEF OF STAFF KHARUBI AND INTERIOR MINISTER HUMAYDI, HAVE HAD SERIOUS DIFFERENCES WITH QADHAFI OVER THE PAST YEAR. DESPITE THESE AND OTHER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN QADHAFI AND HIS FOUR COLLEAGUES, IT WOULD NOT APPEAR THAT QADHAFI IS THREATENED BY RIVALS WITHIN THE RCC OR IN THE CABINET. WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING TO INDICATE THAT THOSE RCC MEMBERS WHO ARE IN EXILE OR UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN LIBYA HAVE SUBSTANTIAL FOLLOWING INSIDE LIBYA SUFFICIENT TO POSE THREAT TO QADHAFI.

--WE LACK PRECISE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LOYALTY OF THE ARMY. DISILLUSIONMENT AMONG HIGHER RANKING OFFICERS HAS GROWN SINCE THE TROUBLES OF AUGUST 1975. QADHAFI NO
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LONGER TRUSTS HIS OFFICER CORPS AND HAS MOVED YOUNGER KINSMEN AND CLANSMEN INTO STRATEGIC POSITIONS OF CONTROL. HE HAS SOUGHT A COUNTERVAILING FORCE BY APPEALING TO AND ARMING SELECT DESERT TRIBESMEN, HAS DEVELOPED THE POLICE INTO A PARAMILITARY FORCE, AND REPORTEDLY MOVED MAJOR AMMUNITION STORES FROM VARIOUS BASES IN BENGHAZI AND TRIPOLI DISTRICTS TO HIS HOME TOWN OF SIRTE. NEVERTHELESS QADHAFI APPEARS TO HAVE STRONG SUPPORT AMONG ENLISTED MEN AND YOUNGER OFFICERS FROM SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES WHOSE FAMILIES HAVE BENEFITTED FROM AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

--ANOTHER SOURCE OF OPPOSITION TO THE CURRENT REGIME IS FROM URBAN COMMERCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL MIDDLE CLASSES AND FORMER ELITES. QADHAFI'S REORGANIZATIONS OF LIBYA'S UNIVERSITIES AND PURGES OF "ANTI-REVOLUTIONARIES" HAS GENERATED INCREASED OPPOSITION FROM STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITY STAFF. THESE GROUPS, HOWEVER, SEEM TO BE RELATIVELY

POWERLESS AND UNORGANIZED IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO QADHAFI'S RULE.

-- WE HAVE HEARD THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN AN ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION AGAINST QADHAFI IN OCTOBER. THERE ARE INDIVIDUALS IN GOVERNMENT, COMMERCE, AND THE MILITARY WHO OPPOSE THE CURRENT REGIME BUT THEY DO NOT YET APPEAR TO CONSTITUTE AN ORGANIZED GROUP CAPABLE OF OVERTHROWING THE GOVERNMENT. THERE IS REGIONAL AND LOCAL RIVALRY BUT IT DOES NOT SEEM TO THREATEN NATIONAL CONTROL. (THE LARGE CALL-UP OF YOUNG MEN WHICH BEGAN IN EARNEST IN OCTOBER 1976 HAS NOT IMPROVED LIBYA'S MILITARY CAPABILITY; THERE ARE TOO MANY TO BE EASILY ABSORBED AND THE GREATEST IMPACT HAS BEEN TO SLOW DOWN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY DUE TO MANPOWER SHORTAGES IN GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS.) WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF ANY SIGNIFICANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE OBTAINED BY QADHAFI DURING HIS RECENT MOSCOW TRIP.

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-- WITH RESPECT TO REPORTS FROM EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA TUHAMI, THESE HAVE PAINTED AN INCORRECT PICTURE OF U.S.-LIBYAN RELATIONS. WE KNOW OF NO AMERICAN SALE OF EQUIPMENT FOR EARLY WARNING STATION OR OTHER COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT FOR LIBYAN MILITARY. AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN, INCLUDING COMMUNICATION SALESMEN, HAVE BEEN APPROACHED BY LARG FOR SALES OF ALL KINDS. NORTHROP-PAGE WAS APPROACHED RECENTLY AND CAME TO DEPARTMENT TO REACTIVATE A 1974 REQUEST FOR EXPORT LICENSE FOR AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS. OUR EARLIER REFUSAL TO SELL THIS EQUIPMENT TO LIBYA WAS RECONFIRMED.

ROBINSON

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